

REMARKS

The courtesy of the Examiner in withdrawing the finality of the Office Action of December 12, 2006 is appreciated. Claims 11-21 are now in the case.

Claim 21 is a new claim that limits claim 14 to the preferred angular range between 210° and 240°, within the range between 190° and 260° recited in claim 14. Note also in claim 11 (not claim 12) the feeder having at one end of the boom a first feed conveyor having a feeding end. Claim 14 (and claim 21) thus cites angular ranges between two different directions of two different structures and accordingly is not indefinite.

The objection to the drawings and the rejection of claim 19 based on the use of the term "expanse" have been obviated by replacing this term with the word "extension." Claim 19 now reads "having an extension oriented in the same direction," and it is submitted this claim is also not indefinite.

The misspelling of "transversely" in claim 11 has been corrected. In claim 15, the insufficient antecedent basis identified has been corrected by deleting "comprising each their" and inserting "each having a." As to claim 18, the term "the second turning device" finds its antecedent in claim 12, from which it depends. It is submitted that claims 11, 15, and 18 are not indefinite.

Claims 11-13, 15, and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by the U.S. Patent to Branch No. 5,419,439. This rejection is respectfully traversed. Branch is not relevant prior art in that it relates to sorting laundry such as shirts and does not relate structurally to the claimed invention of feeding an essentially rectangular piece of cloth to a feeder nor to its function.

For example, with reference to claim 11, numeral 88 in Branch designates a slide rail and 90 designates a plurality of accumulation conveyors. Both are used for moving garments, such as shirts, slacks or the like hung on wire hangers (col. 7, l. 40-46). Neither structure constitutes the claimed boom that extends transversely of the direction of conveyance of a feeder, or the claimed boom conveyor that conveys a piece of cloth across the boom in the longitudinal direction thereof where the piece of cloth stretches across the boom. Similarly, also contrary to the Examiner's position, numeral 30 shows only a conveyor for moving hanged garments and fails to show or contemplate a feed conveyor designed to receive at the feeding end a straightened front edge of a piece of cloth, as claimed. Thus, there is no turning device (70 or 260) arranged between machine parts that are denoted as set forth in claim 11 or claims 12, 13, 15, and 20.

In the present invention, the feed conveyor or feed conveyors for feeding the straightened front edge of a piece of cloth are situated in front of the feeder. This is possible due to the presence of a turning device or devices that turn and transfer the straightened front edge of the piece of cloth from a feed conveyor to a boom conveyor. In Branch, its conveyors are not defined in relation to a feeder, let alone situated in front of the feeder.

In paragraph 10 of the Office Action, claims 11-13, 15-18, and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by the British patent publication to Mehrhoff No. 2,219,313. This rejection is also respectfully traversed.

There are two techniques presented for conveying cloth to a feeder. In the present invention, there is a boom on which the cloth is suspended downwardly on both sides of the boom. See also EP 666,360 cited on p. 2, l. 6 of the specification (or its

U.S. equivalent No. 5,595,467). Mehrhoff concerns the other technique where a set of spreading clamps spreads the cloth to hang in a single plane, following which the cloth is transferred to the feed conveyor 12 by means of spreading clamps 14, 15. (Mehrhoff, p. 5, l. 12-26) Note in line 14 that the laundry articles are spread transversely in one plane. Mehrhoff thus is not only distinct from the structure and operation of the claimed invention, but also its disclosure is incapable of anticipating the claimed structure and method.

Initially, it should be noted that Mehrhoff neither shows nor indirectly presupposes the presence of a boom. A boom is foreign to the Mehrhoff technique which is apparently recognized by the Examiner in the failure to identify by number or location any boom in the rejections advanced in paragraph 10. The Examiner states that Mehrhoff discloses a device comprising "A boom comprising a boom conveyor (50, 50a) (fig. 7, 8)." But neither Fig. 7 nor Fig. 8 shows a boom and understandably so because Mehrhoff's technique falls in the "single plane" category. Additionally, claim 11 requires a boom extending transversely of the direction of conveyance of the feeder. In the absence of a boom in Mehrhoff, there obviously cannot be any boom that extends transversely of the direction of conveyance of the feeder. Section 102 requires for anticipation that every element of a claim be disclosed within a single document. It is submitted that because of the absence of a boom as claimed in claims 11 and 20, the rejection under Section 102 must fail on this basis alone.

The Examiner also states that elements 50, 50a are each a boom conveyor. This raises the question why is a boom conveyor needed if there is no boom? The answer is that elements 50, 50a are not boom conveyors but are auxiliary conveyors for

conveying the ends of the cloth to discharge conveyors. Note in Fig. 7 that even though two auxiliary conveyors are used, the cloth still hangs in a single plane. A final point on the auxiliary conveyors shown in Mehrhoff: neither conveys as claimed a piece of cloth across a boom in the longitudinal direction thereof wherein the piece of cloth stretches across the boom.

Claim 11 and claim 20 both require a feed conveyor. The Examiner states that element 53 is the claimed feed conveyor. However, in Mehrhoff, element 53 is called a discharge conveyor. Ordinarily, "discharge" is the opposite of "feed." It is submitted the Examiner's position is not supported by Mehrhoff. Note also in claim 11 that aspects of the feed conveyor appear to have been ignored, namely, the feeding end being situated in front of the boom; and the feed conveyor being designed to receive at the feeding end a straightened front edge of a piece of cloth and transfer the piece of cloth therefrom to the boom conveyor.

As to the claimed turning device, the Examiner states that elements 35, 54 meet this term. However, Mehrhoff calls these "transfer members." They appear to take corners of the cloth from the discharge conveyors and transfer them to the spreading clamps. There does not appear to be any turning involved. Claims 11 and 20 both require turning, and the Examiner is requested to explain how elements 35, 54 can turn the cloth as well as how these elements can turn and transfer the already straightened front edge of a piece of cloth. In Mehrhoff, it appears that any straightening would occur after transfer, assuming that straightening is the function of spreaders 14, 15.

The remaining points raised by the Examiner in paragraph 10 of the Office Action concern the dependent claims, and assuming, arguendo, that Mehrhoff discloses

structure as stated by the Examiner, such disclosure would not correct the deficiencies of Mehrhoff set forth above.

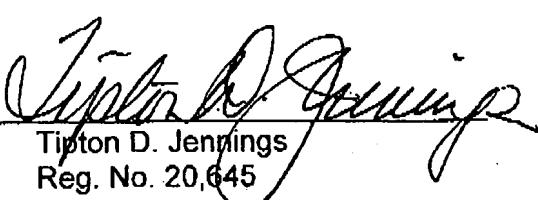
Reexamination and allowance of claims 11-21 are earnestly solicited.

Please grant any additional extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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